Special Projects Competition
Water Equity in the Great Lakes

SPECIAL PROJECTS "M" ANNOUNCEMENT

Competition:
Water Equity in the Great Lakes

Closing Dates and Deadlines:
June 8, 2021 at 11:59 PM Eastern Time

Eligible Sea Grant Programs:
This competition is open to Sea Grant programs in the Great Lakes region. All projects must take place within the United States or territories or their respective waterways.

Award Time Frame:
The proposed start date should be no earlier than September 1, 2021, with projects to be completed no later than January 31, 2023.

Funding Availability:
The National Sea Grant Office (NSGO), in partnership with the NOAA Climate Program Office (CPO), anticipates that up to $100,000 in federal funds will be available to one or more Great Lakes Sea Grant programs in order to support projects aimed at improving the resilience of vulnerable communities to the impacts of flooding through equitable and inclusive stormwater and floodplain management. No matching funds are statutorily required for this competition.

Project Description:
Water infrastructure will need to be improved in the coming decade to prevent flooding along the shores of and within the Great Lakes watershed. Especially vulnerable are communities that have been historically marginalized due to social and economic disadvantages. A recent workshop hosted by NOAA's Climate Program Office revealed the following common themes for many of those communities:

- Aging and/or failing infrastructure is often more prevalent in low-income areas and communities of color due to historic injustices such as redlining. Achieving equitable levels of service is more challenging in those areas due to lack of affordability as well as lack of funds to replace aging infrastructure.
- Social and economic vulnerability must be considered as well as infrastructure needs to gain a coherent understanding of climate vulnerability and risk for homes and whole communities.
- Equitable stormwater planning should involve trusted neighborhood leaders, champions, and ambassadors.

Water and climate professionals implement better strategies when they understand community sensitivities, historic perspectives, and needs; they also are successful when community members 1) are

part of articulating the problem in the beginning of an activity, and 2) maintain relationships throughout the activity so that they are an important part of the solution. When communities understand, take pride in, and feel a sense of ownership for projects that protect their interests, they are more likely to support the long-term maintenance of those projects. This is true for green and gray infrastructure approaches to stormwater management, for example.

In an effort to address the inequity of water resources and support disadvantaged communities, the NSGO, in partnership with NOAA CPO, is seeking proposals for projects that advance the following priorities:

Projects must:

1. Identify vulnerable communities, especially those that have suffered from flooding; and
   - Determine which climate-related hazards need to be addressed in those communities;
   - Identify utilities in those communities that have capital planning needs; and
   - Incorporate inclusive planning opportunities, such as community input to city comprehensive planning, emergency preparedness, and developing climate resilience plans.
2. Work with local partners, preferably by combining efforts. For example, by establishing multi-community work teams to:
   - Support frontline communities (i.e., those with vulnerable populations or that have fewer resources available to address adaptation and resilience); and
   - Establish cohorts of communities with shared adaptation goals. For example, pair communities with varying experience levels.
   - Sharing results with other similar communities, stormwater management utilities and/or districts;

Projects are encouraged to:

1. Collaborate with more than one Sea Grant Program to work together on a project.
2. Coordinate efforts that target stormwater utilities or management districts in the Great Lakes Region, and incorporate input from existing resources/information from staff from the Climate Program Office and the Cooperative Institute for Great Lakes Research (CIGLR).
3. Improve community resilience to the impacts of flooding, (e.g., due to extreme precipitation and lake levels), through stormwater and floodplain management by the following methods:
   - Training for community action targeting local and regional planners, water utility managers, water utility executive leadership, and other community decision-makers who influence stormwater management;
   - Providing educational and professional development opportunities, particularly for future workforce (inclusive of K-12, vocational, and post-secondary education); or
   - Identifying finance and funding for green & gray infrastructure projects; which could include examining co-benefits for clean drinking water supply.

<u>**Application Requirements:**</u>
Consult the NOFO **[NOAA-OAR-SG-2020-2006435](#)**, available at [Grants.gov](#), for eligible applicants, required elements of the application, how to submit, general programmatic priorities and selection factors, and other necessary information. Submit your application to **SPECIAL PROJECTS "M"** under this opportunity in Grants.gov.

Discrepancies between this special project announcement and the NOFO may exist. Specific application details and instructions outlined in this special project announcement take precedence over guidelines in the NOFO.

Applications <u>must</u> include the following elements. Failure to adhere to these provisions may result in a delay in award processing or rejection of the application, based on the extent of the noncompliance.

1. **Project Narrative***. The Project Narrative <u>must</u> include the following documents:*

   a. Project Description. The total number of pages in the project description <u>should not exceed **10** pages</u>. Excess pages will not be included in the review. The works cited, CVs, letters of support, and current and pending support sections do not contribute to the page limit.
      i. Cover page
         - Project title and names, titles, affiliations, and contact information (email and phone) of co-PIs.
         - Budget overview - Total cost and annual breakdown of requested funding by partner.
      ii. Project Abstract
      iii. Project background
         - Explain the specific problem(s) this project seeks to address and justify its importance.
      iv. Project objectives
         - Provide a list of clearly defined objectives. For each objective, provide a concise statement explaining how it is aligned with the goals and priorities of this funding opportunity.
      v. Project details
         - Provide an explanation of the methods you will use to address your project objectives. Explicitly explain how this project leverages the expertise of both researchers and stakeholders.
      vi. Anticipated outcomes and deliverables
         - What are the expected outcomes and deliverables related to the creation of data products, tools, technologies, and management practices that can be directly applied to the project?
      vii. Project timeline
         - Please provide a timeline for accomplishing the proposed work, which covers the entire duration of the project. Include approximate dates for key milestones related to the proposed work, including the accomplishment of anticipated outcomes and release of deliverables.
         - Applicants submitting proposals that involve the use of human test subjects should state so clearly in their application. These proposed research activities require approval of the applicant's Institutional

Review Board (IRB) before such research can proceed. Applicants are responsible for obtaining IRB approval from their institution and providing that documentation to NOAA once the approval is obtained and prior to any NOAA-funded human subject testing. Proposals intending to use human test subjects should specify clearly in the timeline approximately when IRB approval will be obtained and when the testing is expected to occur.

    viii. Diversity statement
- NSGO recognizes it has a particular and unique opportunity to support NOAA's commitment to diversity and inclusion by taking an intentional step that encourages applicants to consider diversity and inclusion as part of their scientific projects. This action has the potential to make an impact on not only the diversity and inclusion in science at NOAA, but also beyond the agency. In this section, describe how the proposed activity broadens the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identities, sexual orientation, disability, geography, etc.) and how they benefit from its outcomes. Applicants are encouraged to review the resources and best practices compiled by NSGO related to diversity, equity, and inclusion: https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation/Network-Visioning/DiversityInclusion

    ix. Works cited (does not count towards page limit)
- All in-text citations should be listed here.

    x. Curriculum vitae (CV) for each co-PI (does not count towards page limit)
- Each person's CV should not be longer than 2 pages. Excess pages will not be included in the review.

    xi. Letters of support (does not count towards page limit)
- All letters of support should be included here. Required in the instance that a Sea Grant program is applying on behalf of a partnership of multiple Sea Grant programs; otherwise, recommended but optional.
- The competition manager should think about who is eligible to write a letter of support and make that clear here.

    xii. Current and pending support (does not count towards page limit)
- Describe any current or pending sources of support if applicable.

b. Abbreviated Environmental Compliance Questionnaire (OMB Control No. 0648-0538)
    i. Applicants must ensure that the questionnaire is completed in full and includes detailed information regarding project location, methodology, and permits. Copies of all permits required for project activities should be included with application materials. If a permit is pending or planned, please provide this information.
    ii. The questionnaire can be found here.
    iii. Guidance on how to complete the questionnaire, including how to describe work that will not involve any environmental impact, can be found here. Examples of questionnaires can be found here.

c. Data Management Plan
      i. All applications must include a Data Management Plan that is compliant with NOAA's [Public Access to Research Results](#) Plan. The Data Management Plan should not exceed 2 pages. The Data Management Plan should include descriptions of the types of metadata and data expected to be created during the course of the project, plans for disseminating the metadata and data to the broader community, and plans for long-term archiving of the metadata and data.
      ii. If proposed activities will not generate any environmental data, such as the scoping activities and research competition, please include the following statement at the end of your proposal: "Because this project will not generate environmental data, a Data Management Plan is not required."

2. **Budget Narrative and Justification.** *The Budget Narrative <u>must</u> include the following documents (Sea Grant 90-4 Forms and Budget Justification) in that order and format. Additional budget narrative guidance can be found [here](#).*
   a. Sea Grant 90-4 Form (OMB Control No. 0648-0362) - Sea Grant 90-4 Forms are required to provide budget breakdowns and budget justifications by year and object class for the proposal. A completed Sea Grant 90-4 Form should be completed for each project year as well as a total budget for the entire project duration (i.e., Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Years 1-3). Guidance on filling out these forms is located in the [Sea Grant General Application Guide](#).
   b. Budget Justification - For each year of the project, a Budget Justification is required. Each Budget Justification should explain the budget items in sufficient detail to enable review of the appropriateness of the funding requested. Each Budget Justification should be attached as a PDF to each Sea Grant 90-4 Form, as appropriate. Guidance on completing the Budget Justification is located in the [Sea Grant General Application Guide](#).

3. **Overall Application.** *In addition to the forms required above, standard Federal Forms and Assurances are required for the overall application and can be found with the application package on Grants.gov or on the Sea Grant website (links found below). These include:*
   a. SF-424 Form ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 4040-0004)
      i. This form, titled "Application for Federal Assistance," <u>must</u> identify the entire funding period, as well as the federal funding amount being requested by the applicant and the non-federal matching fund amount (even if that amount is zero). The form must be completed with the institution's accurate EIN and DUNS and Point of Contact, and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.
   b. SF-424A Form ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 4040-0006)
      i. This form, titled "Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs," should describe the entire funding period in federal and non-federal dollars, for the entire application. Fill out Section B of this SF-424A form to show the overall budget breakdown by object class by year. Each federal and match year should have its own column. If there is insufficient space, an additional SF-424A Form, Extra Section B should be used (see below).
   c. SF-424B Assurances ([Grants.gov](#), OMB Control No. 4040-0007)
      i. The form, titled "Assurances – Non-Construction Programs," should be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee.

      d. CD-511 (Grants.gov, US Department of Commerce)
- i. The form, titled "Certification Regarding Lobbying," should be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee. In some instances, the SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form may also be required. See the instructions on the CD-511 for further information.

      e. SF-LLL (Grants.gov, OMB Control No. 0348-0046) if applicable
- i. The form, titled "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," should be completed and signed by the institution's authorized representative or designee, if appropriate.

Application Evaluation Criteria:

The following criteria will be used to evaluate proposals. Note that the weights of each criteria are different from the Evaluation Criteria laid out in the Special Projects NOFO announcement. Proposals submitted to this competition will be evaluated by at least three independent written reviews based on:

1. Importance/relevance and applicability of proposed projects to the program goals (20%). This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the Great Lakes Water Equity program, this includes plans to work with identified communities in need and water infrastructure organizations to build equitable resilience to flooding or other identified threats from a changing climate.

2. Technical/scientific merit (15%). This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. For the Great Lakes Water Equity program, this includes identifying and utilizing existing data, resources, and tools to fill resilience gaps for water planning in identified communities.

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (10%). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For the Great Lakes Water Equity program, this includes expertise in managing projects of similar scale that involve climate resiliency efforts, stormwater management, infrastructure planning and management, education and professional development, outreach planning and implementation, working with underrepresented communities and inclusive strategic planning, or similar and relevant experience that will facilitate the project planning needed to accomplish the objectives outlined in this announcement.

4. Project costs (5%). This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame.

5. Outreach and Education (25%). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the Great Lakes Water Equity program, this includes: incorporating an effective outreach and education strategy to ensure that the objectives of the project are met and effectively reach all relevant partners and identified communities.

6. Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (25%). This criterion assesses how well the proposed activity broadens the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, economics, etc) and related industries; addresses current and historical inequities; and works to build a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient industry.

Additionally, projects will be recommended for funding only if they have a complete application package and if funds are available.

Other Information:

Reporting:
Selected projects will be placed on existing Sea Grant omnibus awards and progress will be reported annually as part of the program's annual report.

Agency Contacts:
Questions about this competition or the Special Projects Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) may be sent to oar.hq.sg.competitions@noaa.gov. Please specify that your question is related to the Great Lakes Water Equity Special Projects Competition in the subject line.

More information can also be found in the "Frequently Asked Questions" located at: https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Funding-Opportunities. This document will be continually updated with questions received that are of general interest to prospective applicants.

Fillable versions of required Sea Grant forms can be found here:
https://seagrant.noaa.gov/insideseagrant/Implementation

Guidance for completing these forms is located in the Sea Grant General Application Guidance Document: https://seagrant.noaa.gov/Portals/1/Guidance/SeaGrantGeneralApplicationGuide.pdf